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ABSTRACT

Although the first football games were played by Eastern universities in the United States, there was great enthusiasm for the game in the schools of the far West. In the late 1800's football was played in the Territory of New Mexico with contests between "white" universities and government Indian schools. These games contributed to the development of football, introducing strategic elements for the most part devised by the Indians. Though the game as played in the West was to a large extent the same as the East, innovations were brought to it that were characteristically western in nature. The rough individualism of western society brought color and excitement to the game. Though similar to the English game rugby, football developed its own rules. Eventually the extreme roughness of the game threatened its existence. In the face of this threat the National Collegiate Athletic Association was organized and laid down new rules controlling the brutality of football and forming it into a game emphasising skills and strategic play. (JD)

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COWBOYS AND INDIANS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL ON THE AMERICAN FRONTIER--THE NEW MEXICO TERRITORY, 1892-1912

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At some time in the late summer or early autumn of each year, the interest of the nation's sporting citizenry turns chiefly to football, the "kingpin" sport in the American spectrum of athletic sport.* Since the first football contest between Princeton and Rutgers Universities in 1869, the gridiron sport has evolved to a point where it now finds itself being viewed, talked about, financed, exploited, and indeed, worshipped to a greater extent than quite possibly all other sports combined. Further, the mystique of football has penetrated into every social and geographical nook and cranny of the nation. If sport is a religion to Americans, and it may well be just that, then football is its Supreme Being.

Investigators have established a well documented history of football's early heritage--a heritage which owes its legacy to the nation's colleges and universities, and, even more particularly, to the exploits of players and coaches, the very moulders of the game. In discussing the architecture of college football prior to World War I, the era under analysis in this paper, Allison Danzig has cogently stated: "Football is the game of Stagg, Warner, Zuppke, Yost, Williams, Woodruff, Camp, King, Heisman, Rockne, Haughton and Bezdek and the coaches of inventive mind who followed them. Americans all of them and All American is the game that evolved under their guidance

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during a half century of experimentation and progress" (Danzig, p. 5).

Not readily known or universally recognizable to the sport historian, however, was the contribution made to the mosaic of college football development by the infant universities and flourishing government Indian schools of America's last frontier, The American Southwest, or, more specifically, the New Mexico Territory. The record of college football in the Territory of New Mexico begins in 1892 and, until Statehood in 1912, reflects an interesting microcosm of the nation's larger football scene--a microcosm decorated with the individual and "hell bent for leather" character of people living in one of American history's most energetic and rambunctious periods.

On the eve of the introduction of football into the New Mexico Territory, the 47th State-to-be reflected all those components which popularized the American West. Indian raids in the form of Yaqui and Apache forays on outlying settlements were frequent, as were disturbances caused by "rustler" wars between Texan, native and Mexican stock-men. Social unrest in the form of brawling miners and the gunplay of desperadoes and their would-be captors, of which William Bonney, alias "Billy the Kid," and Sheriff Pat Garrett were most notable, punctuated the territory's mountain and desert stillness. By 1881 the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad had pushed its line through the mountain passes of Southern Colorado into the very heart of the territory. Albuquerque, the Territory's largest

town, founded in 1706, not quite two centuries after Coronado and his party of Conquistadores had wandered by the site in search of the Seven Cities of Cíbola, could boast of a population of no more than 3500 souls by 1891. It could, however, point proudly to the fact that among its busier economic establishments were twenty-two saloons, two banks, and three houses of prostitution (Barney, Turmoil and Triumph, p. 5).

Despite the Territory's frontier-like society which characterized most of the period under study, New Mexicans displayed an avid interest in sports and games. Bicycling was a favorite pastime even though the surfaces over which one pedaled made for constant repair of one's vehicle. Shooting contests were abundant and both horse-racing and footracing were popular from time to time. Pugilistic endeavors, both organized and impromptu, were not at all uncommon. Baseball became a popular sport in both interest and participation for well into the depression years of the 1930's. Teams from Denver, Raton, Santa Fe, El Paso, Phoenix, and Tucson, along with highly touted aggregations from the booming mining towns of the Territory, all took part in the play.

But it was football, the most rambunctious of all sports in 19th century America, which most appealed to the imagination and energies of Territorial participant and spectator. From the bi-cultural society of white man and Indian sprang a rivalry destined to lay the cornerstone of football history on the frontier, a history into which the young college football

player dispatched himself with an abundance of energy, self-confidence, wild abandon, and knowledge gained from telegraph accounts of the latest developments in the game. On the other hand, the football playing Indians were among the Territory's most colorful players--players who characteristically fascinated all observers of frontier football with their tricks of deception and skill. This charisma, coupled with a "real race pride and a fierce determination to show the palefaces what they could do when the odds were even," amply demonstrated in New Mexico before 1900 what the nation as a whole would learn after that date, when college football followers would thrill to the exploits of Jim Thorpe and Pennsylvania's Carlisle Indian School. Nothing pleased the Indian more than to beat the white-man at his own game. "It was not that they felt any bitterness against the conquering whites . . . but rather that they believed the contest between red men and white had never been waged on equal terms . . . On the athletic field they felt . . . that the Indian had his first even break, and the record proves that they took full advantage of it" (Saturday Evening Post, p. 43).

Football was first played in the Territory in 1892 and as the leadership for its organization came from the neophyte players themselves, much of the early play was a product of the imaginative minds of individuals who had either heard by way of rumor, or had read and made interpretations of brief newspaper items, as to what developments were taking place in football in

the East--the cradle of the sport's historical beginning. It is of some interest to note that football in New Mexico commenced only two years after the game was taken up by West Point, an athletically minded institution located in the very heart of the game's developmental area. One might thus suspect that New Mexico, though isolated from the chief football-playing areas of the East, quickly became educated in the ways of progress and just as quickly assimilated such progress into its own programs.

On October 7, 1892, a team representing the University of New Mexico, a small, three year old, predominantly "prepper" populated institution, located two miles east of Albuquerque in the arroyo-rutted folds of the Sandia Mountain foothills, played a squad from the Albuquerque High School in a vacant lot north of the town's ice factory. From a description of the game in Albuquerque's Evening Citizen, it is evident that for the most part the brand of play witnessed reflected a rugby-type contest. However, maneuvers were described which hint strongly that purely American football techniques were also employed. For instance, the published account of the game included: "The University Boys soon formed a wedge, placing a man with the ball in the center, and came down the field like an avalanche, sweeping all before them until 20 yards had been gained (The Evening Citizen, October 8, 1892). The flying wedge maneuver, originated by Princeton in 1884, was soon to be outlawed as the game underwent dramatic changes in the early

1900's. That a rugby-like game was played on that October afternoon in 1892 is reflected by several newspaper remarks, the most descriptive of which is the following: "A well planned rush on the part of the high school ended in a maelstrom of tangled arms and legs. Out of it (the "it" most probably refers to a rugby "scrum-like" circumstance) the ball was quickly passed to a halfback who ran the gauntlet of the guards and lay down on the leather behind the goal-line, scoring the second touchdown for the High School" (Ibid.).

Three weeks later, on Saturday afternoon, October 28, 1892, a second game between the two rivals was played and once again the vacant lot near the ice factory reverberated to the stampede-like rushes of the twenty-two players assembled (Ibid., October 29, 1892).

The following fall, 1893, the Territory embarked on its second football season amid a great deal of enthusiasm, particularly as demonstrated by the small student body of the University of New Mexico. Ninety-six students were then enrolled at the University of which exactly half were boys. Practices were organized and a challenge was quickly issued to the Albuquerque High School. The challenge was accepted and preparation for the game began in earnest, at least on the part of "the Universities." They were delighted to learn that the High School team was holding no practices in preparation for the coming battle. On Saturday morning, November 18, 1893, the

University football team met and defeated the High School by scoring a lone touchdown late in the game to win, 4 to 0. The game was a rudely played affair, little different than those played the previous year (Ibid., November 19, 1893).

Their confidence boosted by their success, the University promptly scheduled a second game; this time with the Albuquerque Indian School, then the largest educational institution in the entire Territory (Bancroft, p. 142). The Indians had been taught the game of football in 1892 by Roy Allen Stamm, a member of the Albuquerque High School team of that year. A further note on Stamm is appropriate at this point. Stamm, who played on the University's elevens of 1893 and 1894, graduated from the Albuquerque High School in 1892, passed up an opportunity to attend the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland in order to remain at home and lend assistance to his father who had suffered business failures in the Panic of 1893. He entered the University in the fall of 1893 and promptly became one of its best athletes. Stamm was a stocky, compact, handsome lad, endowed with qualities of leadership which made him one of the most popular University students of the period. He became President of his class, was an accomplished debater, and an outstanding student of the classical languages. In effect, Roy Stamm, termed by the Albuquerque press as "a gallant fullback and a gentleman (The Evening Citizen, November 11, 1893), became the Territory's

first authentic athletic hero. Stamm, whose Mother was a leader in the Women's Christian Temperance Movement in New Mexico, was a member of one of Albuquerque's leading families during a time when the Territory had few families of position.

By commencing football in 1893, the Indian School of Albuquerque became one of the first such schools to take up the sport. Even the famed Carlisle Indian School in distant Pennsylvania did not commence its football activity until 1894. There were better teams than the Indians during New Mexico's territorial era but few were more colorful or fascinating to watch with their tricks of deception and skill. Nothing pleased the Indians more than to out-trick the whitemen in their own game. The hidden ball trick and the football images sewn on their football jerseys at various times throughout the history of their early play lends evidence to this fact.

On a cold November, Thanksgiving afternoon, in 1893 over 300 curious football spectators, among them a large faction of University students, arrived at the Indian School grounds to watch the first of a long series of contests between the two schools. Most of the players on the Government Indian School's team were Pimas and Acomas, with a sprinkling of other tribal representatives rounding out the eleven. Their average age was 17, although two were as young as 15. The University team was driven onto the field in wagons amid the spirited shouts of their student supporters, who cast such intimidating phrases at

the Indians as: "You won't be in it at all!" "You are beaten today!" "The Universities are coming for blood!" The demeanor of the usually composed Indians sagged considerably at this overwhelming display of confidence on the part of their opponents. They requested an immediate weigh-in of all players, feeling that if they were outweighed by less than 100 pounds as a team then they might have a chance. The total weight of the University team was found to exceed that of the Indians by 140 pounds. The inferior physiques of the Government "Redmen" proved not to be a disadvantage, particularly as the game progressed and the confidence of the Indian players increased. The contest was won by the Indians, 10 to 4, with the University touchdown being scored after regulation time had elapsed but allowed to count as the benevolent Indians had already secured the victory (Ibid., December 1, 1893).

On Christmas Day the University played a football contest against the Albuquerque Town Team whose members, although displaying a willing nature and an aggressive approach, knew little of the sport. The University won the contest, 6 to 0, before a large crowd, among whom a hat was passed and the proceeds donated to the Non-Sectarian Benevolent Society, a patron of the town's needy.

Upon hearing that the University of New Mexico was playing football, a challenge for "a friendly game" was issued by the New Mexico Agricultural College located in Mesilla Park near Las Cruces. Arrangements were made for the game to be

played at the Fair Grounds in Old Albuquerque on New Year's Day, 1894. On January 1, 1894 the contest between the two institutions was played and one of the nation's oldest collegiate football rivalries commenced. A single line in the Daily New Mexican, published in polically aloof Santa Fe, recorded the event for posterity: "The University in Albuquerque defeated the Agricultural College of Mesilla Park in a football game, 25 to 5, on New Year's Day (The Daily New Mexican, January 3, 1894).

The final game of the 1894 season--a 26 to 4 victory by the University of New Mexico over the Albuquerque Indian School--saw a crowd of nearly 1500 people on hand to witness the proceedings, giving evidence that New Mexicans were becoming infatuated with football. A twenty-five cent admission charge was solicited with the proceeds to go towards converting a small University campus building into a temporary gymnasium.

In general, football remained static in its developmental phases during the latter part of the 1890's and the early years of the new century. New Mexico football was thus afforded an opportunity to "catch up and regroup" its educative undertakings. By the turn of the century most of the rugby elements, so prevalent in the early games played in the Territory, had disappeared. Football was receiving more coverage in Territorial newspapers and trends and developments elsewhere around the nation were being noted and taken advantage

of much more rapidly by local football players than they had been during the dawn of the era. The game ' wever, continued to be rough and brutal in its execution, not only in New Mexico, but wherever it was played in the country. The development of rules which encouraged mass play utilizing strength and weight, led to a rash of injuries. Protective equipment used during much of the early part of the era was scant and even scorned by most as casting a reflection on the manliness of the individual. Roy Stamm describes what it was like to play the rough contact sport during much of the 1890's: "Our canvas suits--those who were fortunate enough to have them--carried little padding except where towels were stuffed over shoulders and knees. Head-gears, nose-guards, and helmets were not yet introduced and all players cultivated heavy heads of hair for protection" (Stamm, p. 49).

It was not until 1905 that measures were undertaken to curb the brutality characteristic of football. Unofficial compilations of the 1905 football season listed 18 dead and 159 more or less serious injuries as a result of rough play. In the wake of a deluge of protest, President Theodore Roosevelt called representatives from Harvard, Yale, and Princeton--then the leaders of college football--to the White House and told hem that something must be done to remove the premium of roughness from football or the sport would die a quick death under the swift knife of public opinion. "Brutality and foul play should receive the same summary punishment given to the

man who cheats at cards," Rossevelt asserted (Danzig, p. 29). Sobered by the fact that many colleges in the East were dropping the sport entirely, a group of influential college football enthusiasts met in New York on December 9, 1905, to discuss and, if possible, remedy the problem. Out of this meeting an organization was formed called the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (Lewis, p. 721). Five years later the organization became the National Collegiate Athletic Association. Under the leadership of Walter Camp and Henry McCracken, new and far reaching changes were formulated and agreed upon by the august body. The changes made not only saved the sport of football from possible destruction, but rapidly moved it towards being the attractive spectator spectacle which millions of Americans thrill to today.

The most significant single development in the new rules, and one which stands parallel with the development of the scrimmage line and the system of downs and yards to gain, was the legislation of the forward pass. Brute force and strength movements were immediately replaced by the element of the quick striking offense.

With the introduction of the forward pass into football, a caliber of play developed in the Southwest which moved the quality of the game much closer to that played in other geographical regions. Unhampered by the traditional ground game of the East, the forward pass became the foremost feature in the play

of many western elevens. After having undergone considerable argument among the coaches in the East, many of whom were divided on opinions as to the value of the forward pass to football, it was finally decided in a very close vote, to retain the maneuver. Walter Camp, an original sponsor of the maneuver, later wanted it removed from the game, but Percy Haughton of Harvard led a group of pass-minded coaches who were successful in retaining the game's most spectacular element. Few Eastern colleges used the forward pass to any extent prior to 1912. The rules attached to the pass at that time made its use a definite gamble. When a pass was thrown it had to be delivered within a five yards distance to either side of the point where the center snap of the ball had occurred. An incomplete pass was penalized and if a pass was touched, but not caught, it could be recovered by either side, much like a fumbled ball. Then, too, a team had to make the required ten yards for a first down in three downs rather than in the more contemporary four. The fact that the traditionally conservative East shunned the pass for the most part was as obvious as was the fact that Western teams, with their "hell bent for leather," wide open style of play, embraced it avidly.

The new rules, particularly those concerning the forward pass, received wide coverage in the nation's newspapers. The passing maneuver became a subject of much controversy. The controversy served to educate many of the more remote areas of the nation. The distinct gamble involved in utilizing the pass

appealed to Western players, most of whom were reared in environments where gambling was prominent, whether done for money, crops, or other types of valuable articles.

According to Danzig's research (Danzig, p. 34) St. Louis University was the first to use the forward pass, sometime in late September, 1906. Further, Danzig states that the forward aerial maneuver was in use in the Southwest as early as 1908, particularly at the University of Arkansas (Ibid., p. 38). If Danzig's study is correct, then his investigation did not include the football history of the New Mexico Territory. On October 13, 1906, in the season's opening game against the Albuquerque Indian School, the University of New Mexico utilized the forward pass for the first time. Granted, it was used only sparingly and chiefly to get out of "a tight spot," but nevertheless, used in the 28 to 5 victory over the Indians (The Albuquerque Journal Democrat, October 14, 1906). Since that date the record of New Mexico football is filled with references to various aspects of the forward passing maneuver.

As the period of New Mexico Territorial history drew to a close during the early years of the twentieth century, the football scene widened considerably. The New Mexico Normal College in [illegible]ailroad center of Las Vegas launched a competitive program against its Territorial brethren, as did the New Mexico School of Mines in Socorro and The Santa Fe Indian School in the Territory's capital city. In 1908 the first of many football contests took place between The New

Mexico Military Institute and the University of New Mexico. The initial game was played in Roswell and The Cadets had given "The Universities" a $400 guarantee for the contest. The total gate of the game, won by the University, 16 to 12, was $15.00, and the balance of the guarantee totaling $385 had to be extracted from the school's coffers in order to meet the obligation to the visiting team (Kelley, p. 104). The season of 1908 also witnessed football contests between New Mexico institutions and schools from the neighboring territory of Arizona.

The Albuquerque Indian School continued to play College Football until 1922 at which time the institution transferred its competitive gridiron instincts to playing in New Mexico's rapidly developing high school competitive structure.* Its contribution, and that of the Santa Fe Indian School, contributed a colorful chapter to the football history of the period, just as had the exploits of its more celebrated eastern counterparts--the Haskel Indian School in Kansas (Evans, pp. 285-310) and The Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania. In fact, many of the Indian youngsters from the reservation areas of the New

* NOTE: It is not known for certain why the Indian School was allowed to compete on an intercollegiate level. Perhaps it was the immensity of the institution: perhaps the older age of its students when compared with regular high school students. Whatever the reason, when the Territorial Intercollegiate Athletic Conference was formed in the early 1900's the Indian School was given membership--a membership which was denied to all other high school-type institutions.

Mexico Territory who matriculated at its Indian Schools, were, in time, sent east to attend both Haskel and Carlisle (Bancroft, p. 742).

The Territory's collegiate football scene continued to blossom after World War I, riding the crest of American sporting interest into the modern period. But even though thousands cheer the efforts of the State of New Mexico's modern "gridiron gladiators" this investigator of the past can't help but recreate with nostalgic appreciation the ghostly apparitions of bygone days--of Cowboys and Indians playing football, their efforts spurred on by the popular cheer of the day echoing across the field of friendly strife:

Chickee-currunk-currunk-curroo!
Varsity, Varsity, N.M.U.
Razzle, Dazzle, Boom!
Varsity, Varsity, Rah, Rah, Ree!

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